

## PROMINENT CITIZENS EXPERT TAX DODGERS

Examiner William H. Sands So Reports to the State Tax Commission.

MILLIONS HAVE BEEN OMITTED

Suggests Prompt Prosecutions of Prominent Men for Falsely Swearing to Tax Returns, Under Perjury Section of Code.

Citizens of large wealth and influence in Virginia, some of whom hold positions of prominence and responsibility in the State, but none of whom he specifically names, are accused of perjury by Major William H. Sands, Examiner of the State Tax Commission. In a paper he submitted to the State Tax Commission for the information of that body, the examiner makes a series of charges with specific facts for the purpose of evading payment of their taxes. Astonishing disclosures are made with reference to tax dodging that has been practiced for many years. The Commonwealth and the mechanic, the artisan, the farmer, the small householder and others of moderate means are not the sufferers. The examiner of records has been carrying the burden of the rich man's tax evasion upon the shoulders of the poor.

The suggestion Major Sands makes to the Tax Commission, which is now in session and whose program of procedure may be shaped to meet unusual conditions revealed by the examiner, are summed up briefly thus:

WANTS REDUCTION IN CHARGE

FOR PEOPLE OF SMALL MEANS

On the general subject of taxation, he says that reductions can be made at once for the benefit of people of moderate means.

On the question of equalization, he says that the State Tax Commission should disclose holdings by wealthy taxpayers.

On segregation, "It is impossible," he says, "to segregate property until you are informed of values of things or properties justly available for segregation, though you can guess at it or continue the burden on the small taxpayer."

The remedy he prescribes is appointment by the Governor of State Auditor of one or more officers to receive the returns of the taxpayers, to make false oaths, and to make them liable to prosecution for perjury. "I know the facts. Many would like to have their sworn tax returns exposed. For years some have sought to evade the law, but they have only to refer to their individual cases to show the reasons actuating them. The law applies not only to the wealthy, but to the poor."

While no reference is contained in the report to what the office he is holding is worth to the examiner, it is learned that the State Auditor, appointed last year in Richmond to \$3,500 and in Henrico County to approximately \$2,700. This was brought to the attention of the Tax Commission by Examiner Sands.

FINDS MILLIONAIRES WITH NO PROPERTY RETURNS

In a communication addressed to the chairman of your commission, under date of June 10, 1914, in speaking of the work of the office of Examiner of Records of this, the Tenth District, I wrote that:

"The examinations of many thousands tax returns, covering years in each case, have been made by me and my assistants. In the process of making these returns, a strange omission to list intangible property. Millionaires return none, other reputed wealthy men return their property, and it is only necessary that a most cursory examination be made to demonstrate that this character of property escapes taxation. It is a very limited examination, and that in the hands of the moderate means. Most frequently those trying for tax reform are those I have found heretofore having little, if any, taxable property. But to those who doubtless sooner or later apprehend they may be overtaken in their erroneous returns together with those holding large amounts of bonds, notes, stocks and money who are required to pay the entire taxes on the land owner or the person owning a small amount of visible personal property."

"The examination has been confined not only to the estates of decedents, for I have extended it to those living for the sake of comparison, and in my office you will find the returns of the rich men and none of them holding responsible positions in this State, and contributing to the support of the State less than \$2, excluding the capital tax, and this is the rule rather than the exception."

COULD FILL STATE TREASURY TO OVERFLOWING

"There is a remedy for this false swearing and it has only to be used to see the returns of the State overflowing and reductions of these taxes rendered not only possible, but mandatory. To demonstrate this pick out the names of a dozen wealthy men of this State and let them pay their tax returns covering a period of ten to twenty years be made, and the results.

"The most important office in the State is that of Commissioner of the Revenue, and yet how often is it that it is filled with some ignorant, worthless or incompetent man, and again the office is filled with an honest or competent party who fearlessly discharges his duty, efforts are made to bring about his departure."

"Now that I am before you, I shall give just as concisely as possible my observations and experience in the tax investigations, and offer some suggestions, which I hope will not be inappropriate."

He reminds the Tax Commission that for years he has held to the theory that taxes can be decreased, with a proper rating or assessment of intangible property.

OWNERS' LIST WERE BAGATELLE AS COMPARED WITH HOLDINGS

"I am still of the same opinion. Within the last sixty days acting under the instructions of the Auditor and the Attorney-General, there has been a count of omitted assessments of intangible property to the value of \$10,434,000, and the taxes on same actually amounting to \$445,000. Henrico County, \$35,000. The exact amount payable to this city I am not in a position at the present time to state.

"During the lifetime of parties owning or possessing at the time of their death assets over \$25,000. In an examination of some 500 cases, few, if any, have been found where there is listed any intangible property and where it is listed it is a mere bagatelle in comparison with their actual holdings."

Another thing in this connection let me say to-day is that I have made of thirteen taxpayers in this city, whose aggregate intangible property at death amounted to \$1,340,000, the actual

amount listed by them the last year of their life amounted to about \$14,000. Of intangible property, the average value of their intangible property being \$1,400. These thirteen parties whose returns were examined, in their lifetime were rated as people of means, some of them being worth in intangible property over \$300,000. Now the questions actually arise, how could these things exist? The answer is simple. It is because they placed their life time returns in the hands of the State, and were their own assessors, and as such evaded or made returns to suit themselves.

I am confident that with the cooperation of the officers of the law, such as we are now receiving, in this district alone, from \$10,000,000 to \$20,000,000 of omitted intangible property will be brought to light within the next sixty days. What is true of this city and this section, I feel satisfied is true of other cities of the Commonwealth.

The examiner offers some suggestions which are based upon his own study of the questions he discusses, his personal observation and his investigation.

MAKES SERIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS

These are given in a sequence of five, as follows:

First—"That tangible property to the value of \$1,000 be placed on a local rate of taxation to every citizen of the Commonwealth. This will give relief to more people and be more far-reaching than the present rate of taxation, which might be granted, and a small per cent for those who have always borne more than their just proportion."

Second—"The rate of taxation on intangible property should not exceed, namely, 50 cents on the \$100, this in lieu of all municipal or local taxation. This is the rate of taxation on intangible property are entitled to."

Third—"The counties should have not exceeding two commissioners, one should be preferable, then there would be no incentive for unequal valuations of tangible property within the county limits."

Fourth—"The Auditor, or some one appointed to him, with a supervisory, should be empowered to review the returns of all commissioners of the revenue, and see that they discharge properly their duties in listing for taxation the citizens' holdings of tangible property."

Fifth—"If money in the hands are to be relieved of any portion of the burden of taxation, safeguards should be placed around exemptions, so as to prevent evasion of securities. Evasion of the law, and only such moneys as have been on deposit for thirty days or more in banks should be exempted. As long as a commissioner is elected, he will be exceedingly hard to secure those who fearlessly discharge their duty, for no sooner has a commissioner received his commission, than he is faced with the duty of listing the holdings of a community, will seek his defeat."

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## How're We Going to Get Anywhere?



## WOMAN DIES FROM OVERDOSE OF LAUDANUM

Had Been Accustomed to Take Drug Daily and Died After Receiving Unusually Large Dose.

Olivia Blount, thirty-seven years old, and who lived at 3725 Lester Street, died at 7:30 o'clock of laudanum poisoning, she having been accustomed to take a dose of the drug daily, and Tuesday took an unusually large dose, which caused her death.

The woman was found by her husband, who called a doctor, who found her dead. The doctor called a coroner, who found her dead. The coroner called a jury, who found her dead.

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## MUST REPAIR CITY HALL BOILERS OR LOSE POLICY

City Attorney Gives Opinion Upholding Condition of Ocean Accident

The matter was brought to the attention of the City Attorney on August 13, after Building Inspector Butler had presented to the board several communications from Byron Cummings, chief inspector of the Ocean Accident and Guarantee Corporation, who had written the condition of boilers No. 2 and No. 3 in the City Hall, requiring certain repairs to be made which, Mr. Butler estimated, would cost about \$1,500.

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## SOUTH RICHMOND WOODLAND HEIGHTS TO BE MADE SANITARY

Citizens' Association Takes Steps for Removal of Garbage and Refuse.

ELKS HOLD SPECIAL MEETING

Social Session of Odd Fellows to Be Held To-Night, When Grand Secretary Turner Will Speak—Cases Heard in Police Court.

Preparations have been made by the Woodland Heights Citizens' Association for the removal of refuse and garbage in the neighborhood. The association will have a special meeting to-night, at 8:30 o'clock, in the Elks' Home, 1111 North Main Street, to discuss the matter. The association will have a special meeting to-night, at 8:30 o'clock, in the Elks' Home, 1111 North Main Street, to discuss the matter.

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